

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Custom Engineering Co

Northwest Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center

Custom Engineering and Riley Power Solve Skilled Worker Crisis

Client Profile:

Custom Engineering is a fabrication and machining company located in Erie, Pennsylvania. The company was founded in 1954 and employs 200 people. Riley Power, also located in Erie, manufactures pressure parts, pulverizers, burners, and stokers. Founded in 1890, the company employs 200 people.

Situation:

Custom Engineering and Riley Power were experiencing a critical shortage of certified welders because two other major area employers, General Electric and Erie Shipbuilding, were hiring certified welders in great numbers. The demand for skilled welders in the region had outgrown the supply of skilled workers. Local training programs were not able to meet the skill levels required for these certified welders. Riley Power and Custom Engineering contacted the Northwest Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center (NWIRC), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for assistance in obtaining the skilled workers needed.

Solution:

NWIRC, The Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership, the Northwest Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board, Clarion University and the Erie County Technical School worked together to develop a high quality welder training program customized to meet each company's particular certification needs. Incumbent worker students began a five-week welder training course instructed by a certified welding tester and educator who built individual curricula for the students tailored to the needs of each company. A few students were already employees of the companies; others were both new to the companies and to welding. The employee selection was very intense, the training facility equipment was new, and the student success was measured by achievement of all required certification. The program provided Custom Engineering and Riley Power with skilled employees. Both companies continue to flourish and remain mainstays of the program which has expanded to several other Northwest Pennsylvania communities.

Results:

- * Retained 86 percent of students in program.
- * Improved production.
- * Created 60 new jobs.
- * Achieved a more competitive and profitable position.

Testimonial:

Custom Engineering:

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"The school has enabled Custom to continue to be competitive and current. Having students graduate in 5 weeks and then coming to the shop able to do our work with minimal instruction has helped us to bid more work and ship more finished product. We would have really been at a disadvantage without this unique plan and service."

Riley Power:

"This has truly been an extraordinary effort on the part of many entities but especially the Northwest Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center. Riley Power was faced with a situation involving an increasing workload and not enough trained craftsmen to perform the work. Through this training initiative, we were able to hire good employees with establish basic skill sets. As a result, this training has assisted the company in meeting manpower requirements and has provided the impetus to develop additional skill requirements. We are most grateful for the assistance provided by our local Industrial Resource Council."

Jim Borelli, Custom Engineering and Mike Diaco, Riley Power, Human Resource Managers